

Fishing Bridge & Lake Day Hikes

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Yellowstone National Park



Welcome to the Fishing Bridge and Lake areas

The shores of Yellowstone Lake have attracted humans for centuries—and provide excellent habitat for wildlife. We invite you to spend a few hours hiking the area’s scenic trails. Always carry rain gear, extra food and water, and other emergency equipment when venturing into the backcountry. Be sure to obtain current trail condition and bear activity information at the Fishing Bridge Visitor Center.

Cautions

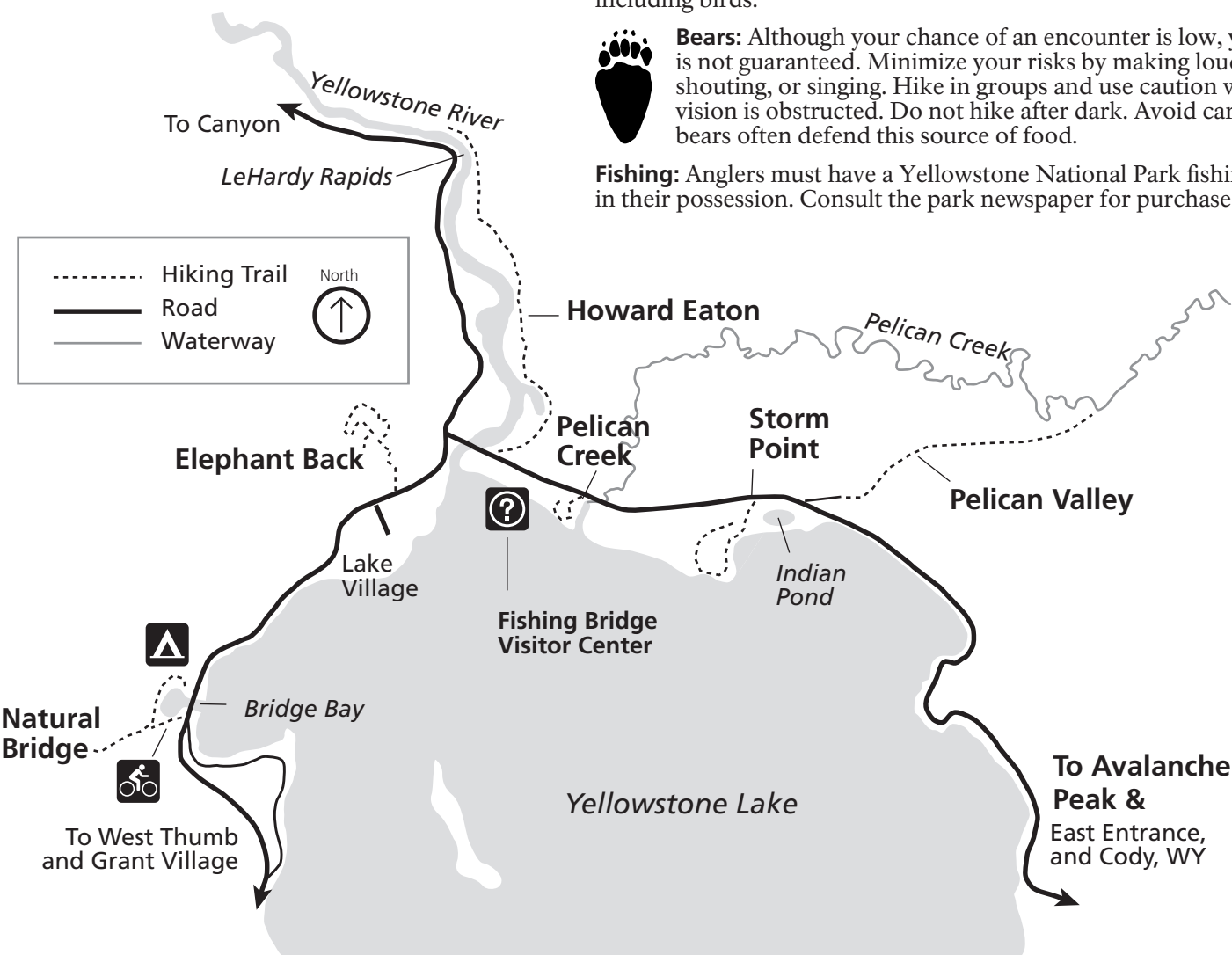
Hydrothermal areas: The thin ground in these areas breaks easily, and often overlies scalding water. Stay on the trail.

All Wildlife: You must stay at least 100 yards (91 m) away from bears and wolves; and at least 25 yards (23 m) away from all other animals—including birds.



Bears: Although your chance of an encounter is low, your safety is not guaranteed. Minimize your risks by making loud noises, shouting, or singing. Hike in groups and use caution where vision is obstructed. Do not hike after dark. Avoid carcasses; bears often defend this source of food.

Fishing: Anglers must have a Yellowstone National Park fishing permit in their possession. Consult the park newspaper for purchase locations.



Natural Bridge

Distance, round trip: 3 miles (5 km)

Estimated time: 1–2 hours

Difficulty: easy



The bike trail to the bridge begins just south of the marina off the Grand Loop Road.

Trailhead: Bridge Bay Marina parking lot near the campground entrance road.

The natural bridge is a 51 foot (18 m) cliff of rhyolite rock cut through by Bridge Creek. The hiking trail meanders through the forest for ¼ mile (0.8 km). It then joins a service road and continues to the right (west) for 1 mile (1.5 km) to the Natural Bridge. The short but steep switchback trail to the top of the bridge starts in front of the interpretive exhibit. **To protect this fragile resource, the top of the bridge is closed to hiking.** Above the natural bridge, the trail crosses the creek through a narrow ravine and then continues along the cliff before rejoining the road. Exercise caution when crossing the ravine.



Trail closed until early summer while bears feed on spawning trout in Bridge Creek. Inquire at the Fishing Bridge Visitor Center for opening date and other closures.



When Hiking in Bear Country:

BE ALERT for bears, tracks, and scat.

MAKE NOISE if visibility is limited.

HIKE IN GROUPS of three or more.

CARRY BEAR SPRAY and know how to use it.

DO NOT RUN.

Pelican Creek

Distance, round trip: 1.3 mile (2 km)

Estimated time: 30 minutes–1 hour

Difficulty: easy

Trailhead: West end of Pelican Creek Bridge, 1 mile (1.5 km) east of Fishing Bridge Visitor Center.

This short but diverse trail travels through the forest to the lakeshore before looping back to the trailhead. It is a scenic introduction to a variety of Yellowstone’s habitats and is a good place for birding.

Storm Point

Distance, round trip: 2.3 miles (3.7 km)

Estimated time: 1–2 hours

Difficulty: easy

Trailhead: Indian Pond pullout, 3 miles (5 km) east of Fishing Bridge Visitor Center.

This trail begins in the open meadows overlooking Indian Pond and Yellowstone Lake. It passes alongside the pond before turning right (west) into the forest. The trail continues through the trees and out to scenic, wind-swept Storm Point. The rocky area near the point is home to a large colony of yellow-bellied marmots. Following the shoreline to the west, the trail eventually loops back through the lodgepole forest and returns to Indian Pond.



Often closed in late spring and early summer due to bear activity. Inquire at the Fishing Bridge Visitor Center about trail closures before hiking.

Elephant Back Mountain

Distance, round trip: 3.6 miles (5.8 km)

Estimated time: 1½–2½ hours

Difficulty: moderately strenuous

Trailhead: Pullout 1 mile (1.5 km) south of Fishing Bridge Junction.

This trail climbs 800 feet (244 m) in 1½ miles (2.4 km) through the dense lodgepole forest. After one mile, the trail splits into a loop. The left fork is the shortest route to the top, though both join again at the overlook. The overlook provides a sweeping panoramic view of Yellowstone Lake and surrounding area.

Howard Eaton

Distance, round trip: 7 miles (11.3 km)

Estimated time: 2½–3½ hours

Difficulty: easy

Trailhead: Parking lot on east side of the Fishing Bridge.

From the east side of the bridge, the trail follows the Yellowstone River for a short distance before paralleling the service road. After leaving the road, the first two miles (3.2 km) meander through meadow, forest, and sage flats with frequent views of the river. The last mile (1.6 km) passes through a dense lodgepole pine forest before climbing gradually to an overview of LeHardy Rapids.

Return by the same route. (Trail continues to the Artist Point Road at Canyon, 12 miles [19 km] away, but is not well maintained, requires a full day, and a car shuttle.)



Often closed due to bear activity. Inquire at the Fishing Bridge Visitor Center before hiking.

Pelican Valley

Distance, round trip: 6.8 miles (10.8 km)

Estimated time: 4–5 hours

Difficulty: moderately easy

Trailhead: Turn onto the gravel road across from Indian Pond, 3 miles (4.8 km) east of Fishing Bridge Visitor Center; park at end of road.

You are entering some of the best grizzly country in the lower 48 states. The trail heads north, crosses a few bridges through a meadow, then enters the forest. After it leaves the forest, it ascends a small hill to a nice overlook of the valley, with the creek below and the Absaroka Mountains to the east. From here, the trail turns slightly to the right (east) and passes through a small hydrothermal area. Stay on the trail through this fragile and hazardous area. Soon, the trail veers north (left), crosses a small creek, and climbs up a cutbank. This is a good place to enjoy the views of Pelican Creek. One mile farther, the trail reaches a washed-out bridge. Beyond here the trail continues into Yellowstone’s vast backcountry. The dayhike stops here; return by the same route.



Many restrictions apply to this trail because it is in prime grizzly bear habitat:

- Closed until July 4th
- Day-use only, 9 am–7 pm
- Groups of four or more hikers recommended
- Off-trail travel prohibited on the first 2.5 miles (4 km)

Avalanche Peak

Distance, round trip: 4 miles (6.4 km)

Estimated time: 3–4 hours

Difficulty: extremely strenuous

Trailhead: 19 miles (30.6 km) east of Fishing Bridge Junction (8 mi/12.9 km west of East Entrance), across the road from pullout at west end of Eleanor Lake.

Across the road from the parking area and to the right of the creek, the trail enters the forest and begins its steep ascent—2,100 feet in 2 miles (3.2 km). In just over a mile, it arrives at the base of the large bowl of Avalanche Peak, then continues to the left and switches back over large talus slopes to an open level area below the summit. Follow the established trail up to the narrow ridgeline and cross it with extreme caution. Those who make this arduous hike will be rewarded with stunning views of some of the park’s tallest and most remote alpine peaks. Return by the same route.

Caution

- This trail is often snow-covered until early July.
- This strenuous, high elevation trail is not recommended for persons with heart and/or respiratory problems.
- Be aware of lightning above treeline.
- Even on warm summer days, bring rain gear, wool hats, and gloves.
- Burned trees may fall without warning.



Grizzly bears frequent this area in the fall, seeking out whitebark pine nuts. Hiking this trail is not recommended in September and October.

For more information

www.nps.gov/yell

Visitor centers have a free hike handout for each major area of the park. A “Day Hike Sampler,” with a hike or two per area, is also available along with several guides for trails throughout the park.